

How Do We Change the Way We Use Foreign Assistance to Help Prevent Deadly Conflicts?

Ted Morse

Executive Summary

The topic of this paper is how do we change the way foreign assistance works in an increasingly unstable world: it has been interpreted to mean how do we change the way we use foreign assistance to help prevent deadly conflicts.

Over the years, development professionals have said if they are given enough time and money, they can develop countries that have too much at stake to resort to violent conflicts. But they have repeatedly seen their development work destroyed by bad governance and conflict.

State and USAID have tried several times recently to introduce conflict prevention into their work: Preventative Diplomacy, Secretary's Preventative Initiative (SPI), Greater Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI) and conflict prevention in the Mission Performance Plan have come to very little, or failed. There are two major reasons for this:

- a. Foreign Service officers did not, and do not believe, violent conflicts can be foreseen, nor prevented, especially by U.S. foreign aid.
- b. Many complicated bureaucratic reasons blocked implementation of conflict prevention: these ranged from rivalry and turf to corporate culture to organization and funding problems.

Others in this workshop have been asked to address the first constraint of believing foreign aid can help to prevent violent conflicts. The only point to be added here is a clear, convincing conceptualization of foreign aid and conflict prevention is needed to overcome this disbelief by the foreign and civil service. A different framework on the components of a conflict prevention program, and a suggestion for again trying to introduce conflict prevention into the U.S.G is briefly outlined.

How do we change the way we work to effectively address the bureaucratic resistance that has blocked conflict prevention to date? This paper suggests discussing two major thrusts:

- a. Recognize that both short-term, targeted, operational prevention and long-term, capacity building, structural prevention are needed, simultaneously. Make a clear division of responsibility between State and USAID for the lead and support—including funding for each. This change may sound simplistic, but it addresses several important internal U.S.G stumbling blocks to implementing conflict prevention in U.S. foreign policy and U.S. foreign aid.
- b. Secondly, the paper identifies for discussion (and hopefully decision and action) several other challenges to changing the way foreign aid could be used to help prevent deadly conflicts. These include:
 - 1. Policy and legislative changes

2. Organizational changes
3. Changes to do vulnerability and early warning analysis
4. Changes needed in the decision-making, resource allocation, and implementation processes.

The list is not exhaustive. Changing them is not simple. More analysis and discussion is needed. But these challenges are highlighted because this is where the introduction of conflict prevention has faltered in the past.

After the killer droughts in Africa in 1984-1986, there was a change in mind set in USAID and promoted elsewhere. It was recognized there would be more droughts but they need not result in famine. The famine early warning system (FEWS) grew out of that. When the next drought of equal magnitude hit, tens of thousands died, not a million.

Let us now adopt another new mindset: there will be differences in the world; people need not kill each other to solve their differences. Many violent conflicts can be prevented if we change the way foreign policy and foreign aid work. Millions of lives and billions of dollars are at stake.

Introduction

Over the years development assistance has been asked to focus on many different objectives: reconstruct war-torn countries; bolster people, governments and nations against communism; help meet the basic human needs of a population; assist the transitions from communism to democracy, from state controlled to free-market economies; assist helpless children survive disease, poor nutrition etc; respond to natural and lately man-made disasters with humanitarian relief. (Earmarking of funds for special interests has greatly hampered the ability to keep these foci – but it has been a concession necessary to muster the votes to pass foreign aid bills).

For decades, development professionals have taken the position that if they were given sufficient time and money; they could help develop states that would have too much at stake to resort to violent conflict. Most people believe this. But the reality is we repeatedly have seen decades of development work destroyed by civil and cross border wars, rebellion, corrupt authoritarian rule, and violent conflict.

Is it now time to change how development assistance works in this increasingly unstable world - change to help prevent deadly conflicts that destroy and divert from development progress? Many of us believe the time is overdue.

It is the thesis of this paper that long term development assistance, coupled with preventative diplomacy and operational prevention in the short term, can help build states that are capable of settling most of their differences without resort to violent conflict. The challenge is how do we do this?

In one sense, the challenge seems simple: just change the focus of development assistance to conflict prevention. We all know what it takes to do this: convince leadership to supply political

will: promulgate legislative mandates and policy direction; arrange appropriate funding and procedures; train staff, and organize new working relationships; and just do it!

Three recent high level attempts at organizing conflict prevention assistance have failed; proving it is not that simple. A few years ago the State Department issued a policy call for Preventative Diplomacy; nothing came of it. A Secretary of State launched the Secretary's Preventative Action Initiative, which also failed (possibly because its tag unfortunately was SPI). President Clinton's Greater Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI) has a conflict prevention plank in it. Six years after GHAI was started, it is withering and expected to die when this Administration changes. Similar high level attempts by the European Union and the UN S/G Kofi Annan have failed to institutionalize conflict prevention in those organizations. The many lessons learned from these initiatives have not been professionally evaluated - and need to be. But the overall conclusion is institutionalizing conflict prevention into American foreign policy, and the foreign aid part of that foreign policy, is far more difficult and complicated than its supporters had thought.

It is the intent of this paper to stimulate discussion (and hopefully decisions and actions) about the challenges in changing the way we work to better apply foreign assistance to prevent conflict. The discussion needs to recognize how complicated are these challenges. We need to discuss what needs to change and what cannot change in trying to institutionalize conflict prevention work in the U.S.G – especially USAID and closely related State Department work.

The paper is organized into three parts: some definition of terms is offered in Annex A and B to facilitate communications. A simple conflict prevention framework is offered to add context to the discussion. The body of the paper is an overview of challenges, and changes in USAID and State that might be necessary to facilitate a conflict prevention focus to foreign assistance. The latter may be bureaucratic, but this is the major area where earlier institutionalization attempts have failed.

This paper focuses on the prevention phase of pre-conflict and to some extent on conflict resolution. This is in part because the role for foreign and development assistance in post-conflict reconstruction is well accepted. While there is great room for improvement in this post-conflict phase, it is not in question, as is the pre-conflict prevention work. Exclusion of post-conflict considerations from this paper should not be taken as evidence that post-conflict policy and operations have been fully institutionalized.

Lastly, this presentation takes off from Jane Hall Lute's thesis: a foreign policy based on need for capable states, which are assisted to reach that "capable" status by U.S. and other development assistance. It is important that the audience know that thesis to know the basis for this presentation.

We have an opportunity here to move USAID and State into a pro-active conflict prevention mode. We cannot let the opportunity slip away as earlier initiatives have. Millions of lives and billions of dollars are at stake. A better way for the world to resolve differences is at stake.

After the killer Africa drought of 84-86, a new mind set was adopted in USAID and promoted elsewhere. It recognized there would be more droughts, but they need not result in mass famine. The Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) grew out of that. In the next Africa drought of equal magnitude, tens of thousands died not a million.

Let us now have a similar change of mind-set: “There will be differences in the world. People do not need to kill each other to resolve those differences.” Many violent conflicts can be prevented if we change the way we all work in foreign policy and foreign assistance.

Conceptual Framework

This purpose of this paper is not to elaborate on “what” development/foreign assistance would do to prevent violent conflicts. But it is useful to briefly outline a conceptual framework to draw the distinction between “operational” and “structural” prevention. It is also useful to give a few examples of the types of activities that might be undertaken.

In its simplest framework, conflict prevention work would follow a legislative mandate and executive branch policy pronouncement; each U.S.G agency would use its existing organizational structure, processes, funding and staff to identify root causes of potential violent conflicts; and each would recommend and implement preventative interventions. Based on previous U.S.G experience, that just will not happen. Several dissertations could be written on the reasons why.

The most complex framework is to re-engineer the policies, processes and organizations to overcome the constraints that have blocked the introduction of conflict prevention work by USAID, State and others to date. This is complex. It makes the changes very difficult, even if required.

We need to discuss a middle ground, by identifying what has to change, what could change, and what probably will not change among the following:

1. A new culture of prevention is needed in the U.S. foreign affairs community;
2. A combined vision encompassing both short-term operational prevention, and long-term structural prevention needs to be shared;
3. Legislative mandates would need to be enacted. Executive branch policy pronouncements would need to be repeated and enforced.
4. A convincing conceptual and training syllabus would be prepared by a highly credible group, possibly representing the two U.S.G agencies, Congressional Research Service, a private policy analysis group, and an operational contractor. It would be used not only with policy makers, but also with the unconvinced foreign affairs staff. The objective would be to put forth the convincing argument of why conflict prevention must, and can, be a new focus of U.S. foreign policy; it would be used to train foreign affairs staff in vulnerability analysis and early identification of root causes of violent conflicts; and it would include a “tool box” of illustrative interventions available to help prevent violent conflicts;

5. Vulnerability analysis would again be REQUIRED in the annual U.S. Mission (Country Team), Mission Performance Plan (MPP) and USAID Integrated Strategic Plan (ISP). In addition, field recommendations for appropriate short-term operational prevention interventions, and appropriate long-term structural prevention capacity building measures would be required.
6. To assure inter-agency cooperation and multi-discipline integration, it is suggested that NSC regional advisors hold quarterly reviews of vulnerabilities and conflict prevention in their regions. It is recommended senior staff of Congressional oversight committees participate in these reviews.
7. Office Director level Inter-agency (State, AID, DOD, CIA, and other U.S.G agencies appropriate to a specific country's vulnerability analyses, i.e., Justice, Treasury, Agriculture, etc.) groups would review country MPPs and ISPs, decide on supportive action and allocations of resources. A division of responsibility would guide the group, possibly as follows:
 - a) If the preventative intervention is targeted, short term, and has operational significance to preventative diplomacy in which State is engaged, ESF finds would be allocated and implemented under State lead, with USAID technical support. In Operational Prevention, existing local, regional or international capacity would be used.
 - b) If the preventative intervention is capacity building, longer term and has significance to building the structures needed ultimately by a capable state, development assistance funds (incl. DA, CSD, SEED etc.) would be allocated and implemented under USAID lead, with political/security guidance by State.

Making the distinction between short-term Operational Prevention and long-term Structural Prevention and agreeing on the lead and support responsibilities is the single most important thing that could change the way U.S. foreign assistance could support conflict prevention.

Assign the lead responsibility for Operational Prevention to the Department of State, with a political, preventative – diplomacy objective. Require USAID to support Operational Prevention strategies, using ESF, to provide technical reinforcement to political solutions. Either reaches workable coordination arrangements for this between State & USAID.

Assign the lead for long-term Structural Prevention to USAID with an institution building objective. Require State to support Structural Prevention strategies to provide the political-security context for this work. Either reach workable coordination arrangements for this between USAID and State, or second political/ military officers to USAID to provide this context to Structural Prevention.

The following are illustrative of operational prevention activities that could be supported:

- Assist border discussions and demarcation where borders are in serious dispute.
- Fund exploration of options for land reform where current tenure is volatile.
- Arrange inter-faith action teams to reduce religious conflict in a given setting.

- Sponsor open forums to expose corruption and power abuses.
- Encourage review of curriculum values inflammatory to integration, pluralism, intolerance of different “national-identities” within a political state.
- Fund objective analysis of inequity grievances, to show where they could lead to violence and how to redress them.

Under Structural Prevention, local and regional capacity would be built or strengthened for continuous contributions to a capable state. Illustrative activities could include the following, if such institutions were weak or non-existent. Applications of their specialty could be supported in a specific prevention or resolution situation, as a “learning by doing” part of their capacity development.

- Develop anti-corruption units within and outside government
- Develop good-governance centers in and out of government
- Develop the multitude of civil society bodies needed for free and democratic representative government
- Strengthen independent judiciary and legislative bodies.
- Develop centers for independent budget analysis, policy analysis, media analysis, etc.
- Develop structures to deliver essential services on an equitable basis
- Develop education, religious and traditional authority organizations to imbue society with values of pluralism, diversity, tolerance, and compromise.

To some, the above framework will not be startling. It is not far from what is done now. But what is still missing is the violent conflict prevention context for this work. Democracy, governance, elections, free media, support, etc. goes on now. So does building local capacity for national planning, financing, delivery of essential public services. Yet, we have seen time and again wasteful set backs caused by conflicts and bad governance.

The challenge is can we change the way we work in an unstable world by using foreign assistance differently to prevent deadly conflicts. It is the thesis of this paper that foreign assistance can help prevent some deadly conflicts – but it will take resolution of many internal U.S.G challenges to do it. Key among these has been the suspicion and lack of critical operations between USAID and State on prevention.

Challenges & Changes

Lead In

As stated above, making the distinction between operational and structural prevention and assigning clear lead and support responsibilities, is the most important change that would promote conflict prevention with U.S. foreign assistance. After that, there are numerous bureaucratic challenges that would need to be faced. Some of these challenges are listed below for immediate discussion.

Implied are changes that could be discussed to overcome those challenges. Space and time do not permit the required elaboration of each challenge – change. Hopefully, discussion will add

that elaboration. Also, the list is not exhaustive. It does not reflect the challenges that face a comprehensive inter-agency, inter-discipline restructured focus on conflict prevention in U.S. foreign policy. That is a task worthy of Congressional and National Security Council analysis and authorization.

Some of these challenges are so obstructive that they would need to change in order for the proposed use of Foreign Assistance for a prevention thrust to be effective. Other challenges would probably only need to be mitigated. Still others cannot be changed, and will need to be accepted or avoided. Tomorrow's discussion will be most useful if it can distinguish between the three types of challenges.

Policy and Legislative Challenges

Changing the focus of U.S. foreign assistance to conflict prevention would be a major challenge in Congress, the foreign affairs community, and with the American public. A convincing concept, coupled with evidence of the life and cost saving potential of prevention, would be needed to build policy change support.

Policy makers will rightly challenge where is the criteria for deciding when the U.S. gets involved and when it disengages in either short-term operational prevention, or long-term structural prevention. That criterion is now fuzzy at best and would need far greater clarity if we are to achieve a policy and legislative change.

The policy decision of what preventative work for the U.S. to undertake bilaterally, versus support multilaterally, undertake through IO, IFI or other country aid, would seem simple. No longer would it be decided on the basis of where the U.S. has a vital interest, or even Jane's "need" criteria. But the criteria could be whatever institution has the practical comparative advantage of success. The implications of this are far reaching, and will need additional analysis.

In a macro context, it would not seem like a hard sell to Congress for USAID staff to see the management of U.S. development assistance as creating capable states that would eschew violent conflict. This is what Jane calls "Structural Prevention." It should be very appealing to try to prevent conflicts, and save hundreds of thousands of lives, hundreds of millions of dollars, and reduce the likelihood of U.S. troop deployment. It also fits comfortably within USAID corporate culture and staff skills.

But several important changes would be necessary for Congress and the public to adopt this Structural Prevention focus for U.S. development assistance. The basic foreign aid act is very much in a child survival and humanitarian mode at present. Can this shift in Congress and with the American public to a structural prevention focus? If so, at what loss and gain of votes and support? Much of the USAID process is now geared to "Results" packages; can USAID and Congress shift to measuring aid success with institution building indicators, instead of more understandable birth, death, disease, health, election, etc. indicators?

Timeframe and expectations are additional Congressional challenges. Structural prevention is long term (10-25 years) of institution building even when not interrupted by conflict, natural disasters, policy reversals, and bad governance. Congress, the public, and current administrations want to see immediate impact. The expectations of U.S. development assistance are as numerous as the 2000 pages in the foreign assistance legislation documentation. Can these expectations be changed in support of building capable states? Technically, the process of building capable states can be disaggregated into work and sectors requiring the help of many of the existing special interest groups. But that may lose their support in the process. A corollary to expectations is a tendency to report results as if they are attributed solely to U.S. efforts. Can Congress, public and current administrations be re-oriented to sharing credit for outputs of the combined local and multi-donor effort of capacity building?

It will be a difficult policy change from poverty reduction to capacity development for Congress, media, the public and especially the multitude of special interest groups that have influenced budget earmarking and directives. This use of directives and earmarking has been carried out to the extreme, resulting in very little flexibility and in some cases the misplacement of resources. Such flexibility is important to responding with locally applicable prevention options. Similarly, there is such a history now of these special interest groups and Congress directing from America where development assistance should go that the present budget structure leaves little flexibility to respond to local requirements. Can we change the way the development budget is structured? It would be needed.

If a new Foreign Assistance Act can be accepted, it would give the strongest basis for using foreign assistance for creating capable states. But the negative possibilities of a totally new Act are significant. They range from the broadest, lengthy national debate regarding what should be U.S. foreign policy in the post-cold war period and the role of foreign assistance in a new foreign policy, through discussion of merger, to competing interests of every special interest that may see itself losing-out in restructuring foreign aid for prevention. Instead, the option of just adding a conflict prevention plank to the existing FAA needs to be weighed against the above legislative restructuring complications. The work could begin within the existing legislation or with simple conflict prevention authorization language, coupled with a budget set aside. This may be the preferred way to test the program. But as has been learned from previous conflict prevention efforts, the multi-faceted resistance has blocked less than comprehensive efforts to change.

Several policy pronouncements in support of conflict prevention have been made within USAID and State in the past. We all know how strongly Brian Atwood supported conflict prevention and how disappointing was the result. Staff in the executive branch has been faced with so many "initiatives" that they scoff at the "fad of the month". This brings resistance to change. Introduction of conflict prevention policy has been resisted recently on this basis alone. Leadership would need to be clear, strong & sustained to overcome this resistance. It would also need to assure institutionalization of the policy (esp. in Legislation) that would extend beyond any one Administration. Leadership would need to structure incentives for policy implementation and hold staff accountable for policy resistance.

SIMULTANEOUS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

Institutionalizing Operational Prevention and Structural Prevention roles for State & USAID are the two most important organizational changes needed. One of the problems with long term economic and political development has been the repeated short-term disruptions that have set back progress. Most USAID staff have been reluctant to engage in short term "fire fighting." State/Embassy have been frustrated that USAID's long term development work is seen as inapplicable to the immediate problems facing a country. This disconnect between those involved in long-term development and short-term operations in the way we work must be bridged with significant organizational changes.

A start at this bridging would come from a renewed policy and pro-active commitment, especially in State and NSC, to "preventative diplomacy." A preventative diplomacy role for State would be more acceptable and more successful if combined with practical, technical steps to address the immediate and historical causes of a potential and/or existing conflict. This would be the role of operational prevention, supported by foreign assistance, when parties to a potentially violent conflict could use (outside) options, to help them find local solutions to their differences. Combining USAID technical assistance in operational prevention with State preventative diplomacy would require a significant change in the way we all do business. It would start with mutual understanding of the necessity to bring both of their specialties - diplomacy and technical solutions, together in preventative work and then reflect this understanding in new internal organizational arrangements.

One of the classic tensions in international development is also reflected in stress in the conflict prevention field: this is the difference between assistance to SOLVE or address an identified problem, versus assistance to BUILD CAPACITY to prevent or address generic future problems. Both approaches have merit. Both approaches are needed in different situations - but both need to be deployed simultaneously, not consecutively. This could be brought about with a change in perspective - and that will take leadership and training and changed organizational arrangements.

A World Bank study asked what, in 40 years of all sources of foreign aid, was most helpful to Thailand. The answer was that all donors, in all sectors, were asked to and did build Thai institutions that continually turn out trained Thai manpower, to find Thai solutions, to Thai problems. But at the same time foreign aid helped Thailand work through the transition problems from monarchy to military to civilian rule; to face problems of communist insurgency in NE Thailand; to resolve Muslim rebellion in the south; to help deliver immediate basic services to the people; helped diffuse ethnic tension, with influential Chinese minority; etc. Both immediate problem solving and long-term capacity development-simultaneously, made the greatest impact.

The below table purposely draws a stark distinction between the problem solving and capacity building positions, and the two U.S.G agencies most identified with those positions. This is done to stimulate discussion for a changed way of integrating both short- and long-term business for prevention. If this is not done, existing tensions, mutual frustrations, resentments, unrealistic expectations, or worse yet, neglect, will remain to undermine future conflict prevention work within the U.S.G.

Problem Solving

Capacity Building

State - Embassy
Short term impact
Political objective
Broad perspective
Speed desired
Flexibility stressed
Reaction to present reality
Policy orientation
Outside direction
DRL - ESF funding

OPERATIONAL PREVENTION

USAID - Congress
Long-term impact
Development objective
Narrower perspective
Slowness expected
Adherence to process
Capacity building for future
Technical orientation
Local leadership developed
DA - C/S - SEED funding

STRUCTURAL PREVENTION

Rather than harmonize or obliterate these differences in the context of conflict prevention (no pun intended), it is proposed that we change the way we organize to do business to exploit the strengths in each different approach. To repeat the framework from above, organizationally, it would be to assign operational prevention lead to State, with practical, technical integration by USAID. It would assign structural prevention lead to USAID, with political-security integration by State/Embassy.

By making the assignments per above, it may be possible to reduce the tension between the two approaches and two organizations. The short-term political approach (represented by State and often resisted by USAID), and the long-term development approach (represented by USAID and dismissed as inapplicable to immediate State/Embassy preoccupations), would get full appreciation of the special contributions of each approach and organization to conflict prevention. This in turn would facilitate necessary integration of both operational and structural prevention functions.

Such a reorganization approach will be faced with many corporate culture problems within and between USAID and State, and others. Several of these are outlined below.

One of the major stumbling blocks to come out of GHAI is the realization that the majority of foreign affairs staff (especially USAID & State) do not believe violent conflicts can be predicted with sufficient precision or horizon to prevent them. Similarly, there is strong disbelief in the ability of outsiders and their foreign aid to actually prevent conflicts. To some extent, training in, and insistence on all source root cause analysis and inter-discipline recommendations on preventative measures can help address this. But a far more convincing conceptualization of the contribution of foreign assistance to prevention is needed, followed by reinforcing training on the concept.

USAID's corporate culture highly values long term sustainable development. In that regard, USAID staff should have little difficulty in endorsing Jane's assignment of a structural prevention role to development assistance. A corollary in USAID's corporate culture is to generally avoid, down play the value of staff working in emergencies, relief and post-conflict recovery. That would need to change if they are to be involved in operational prevention - which they should be. One way to change this is to require a U.S.DH tour of duty in operational

prevention work, and insist on that in the promotion panel precepts. Similarly a change from using predominantly contractors, without extensive development experience, to using larger numbers of U.S.DH in OFDA & OTI would give relief and operational prevention the development perspective it needs. At the same time it would bring a change in USAID development corporate culture that is more supportive of operational prevention work and how to integrate it with structural prevention development work.

A thorough analysis is needed of what aspects of State Department corporate culture would need to change to support conflict prevention work by State and by USAID. Some of the more obvious changes needed include the following: preoccupation with the short-term (helpful to operational prevention) and depreciate the value of long term development (needed as the time horizon for structural prevention); a historical State value on reaction to crises, and devalue preventative action; real concern about U.S.G conflict prevention work with non-government organizations that could destabilize governments to which U.S. diplomats are accredited; inclination to separate political-security considerations from development work which works against the integrated methodology required for prevention. Strong, continuous commitment by high and mid-level leadership in State would be needed to make the State culture more supportive of State and foreign assistance roles in conflict prevention.

There already is a challenge to USAID staff corporate culture to view their development project work in the broadest context. The Integrated Strategic Plan calls for this. But, we all know the old adage – “the operation was a success, but the patient died.” What USAID has been experiencing is “my development project was a success, but the host government/state collapsed.” The cross-discipline, in-service training that USAID mid-level staff formerly received in the DSP (Development Studies Program) was important for USAID staff to see USAID project work in the broader political-military-cultural context of building capable states. Something like DSP training should be re-installed.

Beyond just USAID staff being able to “see” this broader context, they and others must have the ability to identify and act on root causes of conflict; this presents another huge corporate culture challenge. In the past (and present?), USAID and Embassy staff, FSNs, government opposition, Non-Governmental Organizations, academics, contractors, private business people, military, police officers, missionaries, civil society leaders, media representatives, etc. say they have understood some of these vulnerabilities. But there is a total disconnect between them and the international foreign policy establishment that should be in a position to act on the understandings. This will take a significant change in the way USAID, State, and the intelligence and defense communities look at their business and organize for it. A corollary of this is a change from responding primarily to government requests, to listening far more attentively to non-government views of what is needed to build a capable society. We Americans, who have an answer for everything, will have discomfort with the change of listening to NGOs.

Many conflicts have significant regional dimensions. Yet most of the U.S. foreign affairs staff have bilateral assignments, and single country operational perspectives. And as regional USAID and Embassy officers have attempted to be involved in cross-border reporting and analysis, it has often elicited more territorial resistance than welcomed cooperation. This must change if

conflicts and possible prevention actions are to be seen and addressed in the regional real world context. Designation and acceptance of more Embassy officers with broader regional responsibilities, and change and acceptance of USAID regional support staff to prevention operations, would be an important field change. Without this or similar changes, regional integration will take place in Washington, but on the basis of primarily bilateral perspectives.

CHANGES IN VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS AND EARLY WARNING

The Ethiopian-Eritrea peace agreement signed three weeks ago calls for an independent investigation into the root causes of that war. International inquiry into the root causes of the Israel-Palestine conflict has been accepted by both parties, and started its work three weeks ago. The Lome peace accord for Sierra Leone fails to address the root causes of that 9 years war, and many people realize this threatens future stability and capability. The international community accepts the premise that it is possible to determine the root causes of conflict AFTER war starts. It should not be a giant leap of faith that objective inquiry can identify the root causes of at least some violent conflicts BEFORE they occur. What is needed is a culture of prevention - placing as high a value on root cause analysis for preventing violent conflict, as is placed on resolving conflicts after they breakout. This priority is now absent.

Arranging for vulnerability and root cause analysis should not be an insurmountable challenge, but it is complicated. As stated above, most people in the U.S. foreign policy community do not believe anyone (especially outsiders) can foresee a potential violent conflict; and even if root cause analysis and early warning could predict conflict, fewer still believe conflicts can be prevented. Such skepticism has undermined the implementation of prevention initiatives to date. About three years ago, the State Department required U.S. Missions to do vulnerability analysis and make recommendations in the Mission Performance Plan (MPP). Because most Ambassadors and Country Team members did not believe in the requirement, did not find it applicable to their situation, and most importantly, did not see a relationship to real resources (people & money) allocated to them, only 3 out of over 100 MPPs addressed this vulnerability requirement. It was just one of too many questions to be addressed in the MPP, and it was ignored (without consequences).

If the policy and concept challenges were met, it would seem the MPP is still the best vehicle for conveying vulnerability analysis from the field. It is inter-agency and multi-discipline; it is broad foreign policy and prescriptive programs, tied to resources. Short of a serious reengineering of the total U.S.G early warning system, it is believed the MPP exercise could support the prevention focus, with the following considerations for discussions.

It would be necessary to change the criteria for deciding when the U.S. Mission should recommend intervening for prevention. It is very uncomfortable for most foreign affairs specialists to intervene in a "non-proven" situation, where only the POTENTIAL for violent conflict exists. This is doubly true if U.S. foreign policy moves from identifiable "vital U.S. interests" to a more general "U.S. needs" foreign policy. Frequently, in the past U.S. intervention only comes when an actual conflict becomes so costly (in terms of money, lives lost or political prestige undercut), or so destabilizing to an ally, that it would be an embarrassment

for a super power to remain aloof. It will be hard (but not impossible) to craft criteria for intervening to prevent a “possible” conflict, but such crafting is critical to a prevention focus.

Training in vulnerability analysis will be necessary if the field analysis and reporting is to become more applicable to both short and long term prevention. Such inter-agency training under GHAI failed to receive a warm welcome in Horn of Africa U.S Embassies. Reasons varied from turf (why was USAID involved in political-security matters?), to disbelief in conflict prevention, to being too busy to engage, to deciding this capability should be trained into host-country, counterpart governments, not U.S.G. It will take more than leadership to overcome this challenge.

If this challenge is to be overcome, in-service, inter-agency, multi-discipline training for U.S. mission staff in conflict prevention (especially root cause and vulnerability analysis) will need to be undertaken. For the longer term institutionalization within the U.S. foreign affairs team, the training should be included in the Foreign Service Officer entrance course (A-100), political craft and economics training courses at NFTAC (former FSI), to both influence corporate culture and to view prevention from the multi disciplines required. Conflict prevention concepts should be strengthened at the Department of State Inter-Departmental Seminar, National War College, ICAF, SES Executive Seminar, and other foreign affairs agency staff training programs. But training and reporting requirements still may need to be reinforced by some personal and institutional accountability methods.

If it was decided that a more comprehensive Early Warning system is needed to underpin a serious U.S.G conflict prevention effort, than a different early warning predictive and response system will be needed. Right now, the political and intelligence early warning systems generally have a short-term perspective and cover immediate, not root, causes – totally inappropriate to long-term structural prevention. They tend to alert executive branch leaders to what may appear on CNN, in the media and in key newspapers in the next day or two that will require “management”. “Long-term” early warning of impending crises is considered 3-6 months, and again for crises management. Only rarely does the political-intelligence community try to predict where violent conflicts could erupt over 0-5 years, where operational prevention could be applied, or in 5-15 years, where structural prevention could be focused. Besides a different time frame, the present early warning system does not often delve into the truly root causes with sufficient analysis to allow specific prevention attempts. Nor is the early warning, multi-discipline, multi-source to even describe a potential conflict from the different sides that reflect the real world of a situation.

Under an inter-agency GHAI task force headed by the State East Africa Office Director, Ambassador David Shinn, a fairly comprehensive multi-discipline processes for Reporting, Analysis, Decision-making And Response (RADAR) early warning was jointly planned with State, USAID, DOD & CIA. It is still a workable model. But it ran into tremendous inter-agency stove piping, turf protections, rivalries and died with resistance. This type of resistance will only be overcome with strong, consistent, high level and mid-management inter-agency or NSC leadership and training.

And these same leaders and managers will need to make trade-offs. One of the greatest resistances rightly came from over-worked official reporters and analysts who rightly said if you want us to do this, you must tell us what to stop doing to free us to do the conflict prevention reporting and analysis requested.

Similarly, far greater stress needs to be placed on multi-source; multi-disciplinary integrated analytical products for prevention response. Classification and compartmentalization restrain this.

Some important progress using inter-agency computers, and all-source shared reporting, has been made. It has been tested and found very helpful in such inter-agency exercises like Bosnia and Kosovo where analysts in all U.S.G departments are reading the same reporting from all sources. The system exists. It is a strong basis for comprehensive analysis and conflict prevention recommendations. (The move of USAID into the RBB (for State budget reasons!) has had multiple program difficulties: one is State does 90% of its communications work on a classified system; and USAID does 98% of its work on an incompatible unclassified system. There is practically no classified email exchange, and only unclassified exchanges with special effort. If foreign assistance is to support foreign policy across the board, but especially in conflict prevention work, this must be remedied. (Similarly, the recognition of each other's CLEARED for secret status and identity badges is essential.)

Changes in Decision-making, Resource Allocation & Implementation

Sufficient reporting exists to start. Besides the inter-discipline analytical constraint, the biggest problem for integrated action is the lack of inter-agency decision making. Too often the lack of political will has been identified as the key constraint. It is the position of this presentation that the lack of inter-agency decision making far out weighs political-will as a key constraint. Of course, the highest level of inter-agency decision making takes place at the NSC and related working groups. But the NSC staff, departmental Secretaries, and Under Secretaries are all too engaged in the most immediate, biggest, foreign policy issues to spend ANY time on only "potential" conflicts. "Fighting the immediate crocodiles leaves no time to think about draining the swamp." It is proposed to discuss pushing the conflict prevention decision-making down to inter-agency geographic Office-Directors levels, with staff work by country desk officers and oversight accountability vested in the Assistant Secretaries, and DASs. This is the level where resources are managed; where problems can be put into the regional context so often required for effective conflict prevention. Again, given the extensive competing demands on staff at these levels, supervisors must decide juggle competing priorities for time and attention, even if they have finally convinced themselves of the potential benefits of conflict prevention interventions.

Institutional responsibility for resource allocation and implementation is critical. A whole other paper could be (and needs to be) written on this topic. The organizational option of USAID staff implementing operational prevention activities led by State/Embassy does create tensions which are important to acknowledge including: the competing demands on scarce USAID staff time, diversion from long-term structural prevention and development, a corporate culture uncomfortable with political-security-intelligence sectors, and sheer TURF concerns. Likewise, State/Embassy staff trying to implement operational prevention has problems of accountability,

technical competence, corporate culture discomfort with operations, coordination problems with long-term structural prevention work by USAID in the same sector; and sheer TURF concerns.

Critical to this initiative is funding flexibility. OTI was established by USAID because it needed a management tool for short term, flexible, more politicized development work with countries in transition from state controlled to market economies; transitions from authoritarian to representative governments. Flexible funding and implementation arrangements were and are considered essential to quickly supporting these transitions, which are different from long term capacity building development needs. That same flexibility is a change needed to support conflict prevention by whichever organization implements it.

For some time, State has become more involved in planning, funding and implementing programs in democracy, governance, elections, justices, public safety, drug enforcement, etc. Some say these programs, critical to conflict prevention in capable states, were undertaken by State to closely integrate them with post-conflict transitions; others say it was in response to USAID's inflexibility; others say it was "turf" and power play. One of the challenges to implementing conflict prevention will be to sort out the duplication between State and USAID in these areas. It may be as simple as defining the operational (State) and structural (USAID) divisions of responsibility, even in the same sectors, in the same country.

As always, real implementation takes place in the field. In one sense, inter-agency, inter-discipline integration is easier at this level. The integration responsibilities of the Ambassador and U.S. Mission are well defined and accepted. But conflict prevention implementation at this level has been stymied in the past by disbelief, continual stove piping and turf. Just as U.S. Mission cross-agency training in crises management has been fairly effective, it is recommended that conflict prevention training be conducted for the several levels of inter-agency integration. A strong requirement for cross-agency participation will be needed to break through the inhibiting corporate culture of the intelligence, political, and sometimes military and development organizations in U.S. missions.

There will also be the need for changes in the way we do business within a country, in a region, and with segments elements of society. That must start with the Ambassador promoting change instead of maintaining the status quo as an illusion of stability and allowing work with the opposition and civil society instead of protecting relations with the government "to which he/she is accredited." USAID would need to change its resistant attitude and relationship with State implementing prevention work on short-term operational problems in the same sectors with the same local organizations/staff as USAID considers "their" counterparts. Ambassadorial leadership, strong agency support and staff training are critical to making this work.

There is a current example demonstrating the need for integrated analysis and decision making for conflict prevention. In Ethiopia, the Embassy POL may be reporting on the Tigre leadership of the new Government of Ethiopia. USAID may report the disproportionate share of domestic budget and private investment going to Tigre; the missionaries and NGOs may be reporting the disaffection of other sub-regional, large, ethnic-tribal groups that feel their neglected grievances are no more being addressed by Tigre leaders than they were under Amhara leaders; intelligence sources may be reporting Oromo and Gallas are organizing for more aggressive airing of their

grievances; Defense may be reporting the inflow of arms to these groups through neighboring countries that have separate regional agendas. But where does all this come together that there is the potential for violent conflict? And what are the operational and structural steps proposed to take with the GOE, local society and regional and international communities to prevent this from becoming another violent conflict (in the tradition of almost 25 years of war in Ethiopia)? Stronger relations with those outside of government are critical to integrated analysis and integrated analysis within a culture of prevention is critical to decisions for preventative actions.

New ways of doing business in a given country is needed with groups outside of government. This includes NGOs, business people, academics, media representatives, civil society, local leaders, clerics, missionaries and any others with insights into people's grievances. It is essential to liaise with others known to have legitimate grievances, and even to understand those known to be greedy. Most of these groups will be reluctant to be seen as informers, or part of an American political or intelligence operation. All this could take an enormous amount of time and staff if done in the traditional U.S. Mission way. All these groups do reporting vertically within their own organizations. New relationships are needed to share their insights into root causes of potential conflicts. Sharing non-attributed reporting electronically may offer some new ways of doing business, as RELIEF NET once proposed.

It must be recognized that U.S.G representatives are not omniscient in their understanding of local situations. We need to learn to listen to others, liaise with others, not only to identify root causes of potential conflicts, but also to understand their alternative ways of addressing those root causes. This field level is also where real integration of operational and structural prevention must take place, helping local organizations to become more capable of solving their local problems – strengthening organizations by their involvement in problem solving, learning by doing.

Ultimately, conflict prevention demands a new-way of doing U.S.G business. It does demand a policy of engagement, the humility to listen, patience in building local prevention capacity, and a thorough airing of comparative options. Restraint needs to be recognized as a useful tool in allowing room for local growth; mindsets have to be broadened to incorporate regional perspectives even while serving in a bilateral assignment, and openness to inter-agency, multi-disciplinary approaches. These changes are probably too much to be expected in even the best of circumstances. They become even more difficult when faced with shrinking foreign affairs staff and budgets. They will only come as trades-off in staff time and priorities. It is in this crunch of priorities that the U.S.G has short-sightedly not only retreated from involvement in prevention strategies but also assumed a posture of non-involvement “because there is no U.S. vital interest at stake.” Meanwhile the U.S. pours in hundreds of millions of relief dollars and humanitarian aid into conflicts we failed to help prevent, and development investments destroyed. We can change this pattern through early involvement in prevention interventions.

Annex A: Definitions

1. **Foreign Assistance:** broadly encompassing all types of U.S.G assistance (development assistance, food aid, disaster and relief assistance, humanitarian

assistance, peace keeping, SEED, ESF, etc.). Partly administered for U.S.G by State and partly by USAID.

2. **Development Assistance:** narrower than foreign assistance; includes DA, Child Survival, SEED, ESF funded parts of foreign assistance; objective long-term sustainable economic & political development in developing countries. Mainly administered in U.S.G by USAID.
3. **“We”** applies to USAID in most cases, but can signify U.S.G, U.S.A and will include State Department when text requires.
4. **Operational Prevention:** short-term targeted assistance to resolve an identified problem in the pre-conflict stage; can be coupled with Preventative Diplomacy during the conflict resolution stage.
5. **Structural Prevention** – longer term, institution building, capacity building to address generic problems in a country on a continuing basis.
6. **Conflict Prevention** - pre-conflict
7. **Conflict Resolution** - during conflict
8. **Post Conflict** - after conflict stops
9. **Violent Conflict** - involves massive loss of life to bring about change, not peaceful change.
10. **Fundamental Question** What has to change for the U.S.G to successfully use foreign assistance and development assistance to prevent deadly conflicts?

Note: Conceptually, the paper addresses preventing conflicts in developing and transition countries not violent conflicts and war between developed countries.

To help clarify and focus the discussion (and hopefully decisions), it is proposed the challenge of changing the way we do business be disaggregated in a couple of ways. While this does damage to critical interrelationships in implementation, it may be helpful to focus the discussion on the changed concepts underlying prevention.

The tasks are different when a conflict situation is in three different phases:

- a. Pre-conflict - involves PREVENTION
- b. Crises, conflict - involves RESOLUTION
- c. Post-conflict - involves RECOVERY

The Operational & Structural Prevention modes may be required in all three-conflict phases, and may be required to be applied simultaneously.

In an “operational mode,” targeted assistance is carried out in close conjunction with a short-term, often immediate objective - often dictated by a political process of preventative diplomacy.

(This closely allies with the use of ESF.) The technical sector may be same as where structural prevention work is being undertaken, but the tactics are operational instead of capacity building.

In the “structural mode,” assistance is given with a developmental objective of building local capacity for a state to deal with preventing, or resolving conflicts to which they may be a party on a continuing basis. It also is to create the capability to conduct effective post-conflict reconstruction if necessary. It is to build long term, sustainable, local capacity including applying that capacity for “learning by doing”. This closely correlates with the philosophy and mandates of Development Assistance (DA/SEED, etc).

Annex B: Stages of Conflict and Types of Prevention

	Operational Prevention	Structural Prevention
Pre-Conflict Prevention	Targeted, short-term political process with technical reinforcement	Capacity building, long-term development process in a political-security context
Conflict Resolution	Targeted, short-term political process with technical reinforcement	Conflict prevention, long-term development
Post-Conflict Reconstruction	Targeted short-term political process, with technical reinforcement	Conflict prevention, long-term development
	<i>State Department lead USAID technical support using ESF</i>	<i>USAID lead, using DA, ESF, SEED, etc. State providing political- security context</i>